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**Current Intelligence Country Handbook**

**SUDAN**



**DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE**

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## SUDAN

### 1. Political

The Republic of the Sudan is governed by a coalition cabinet, dominated by the generally conservative Umma party, and through a constituent assembly of elected representatives from the six predominantly Arab northern provinces. The Umma and its coalition partner, the National Unionist Party (NUP), took over the reins of government in June 1965 after several months of political chaos which followed the demise of a six-year-old military regime.

The fall of the Abboud military junta in October 1964 caught the more moderate, traditional, civilian political parties off guard. The Sudan Communist Party, on the other hand, was well prepared for such an opportunity and quickly organized the establishment of a National Front government in which the Communists controlled a majority of cabinet posts. The leftist government embarked on a series of radical ventures, including active participation in supplying Communist bloc arms to the rebel movement then active in the northeast Congo.

By the spring of 1965, however, the moderates had managed to reestablish their influence, and in the elections of April and May 1965 the Umma and NUP won an overwhelming majority of the vote. The Communists captured 11 seats in the Assembly's special elections for graduates of secondary schools and universities, but in December of that year, the party itself was proscribed. Since that time, the active Communist threat has been minimal, although the party maintains extensive influence in the trade union movement and in university groups.

The civilians have, however, been unable to develop a stable government which might be able to solve the country's serious ethnic and economic problems. The Umma—the political arm of the 4 million member Ansar politico-religious brotherhood—has been seriously divided by controversies between the ultra-conservative and strongly Islamic older party leaders and a younger, more progressive-minded party group. The Umma prime minister chosen in July 1966, Sadiq al-Mahdi, heads the more progressive arm of the party, but he is still subject to influence from the conservative Imam of Ansar and his reactionary followers.

The NUP, the Umma's coalition partner, is an urban-based party which has never developed a cohesive leadership. Although the

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party has remained in the coalition for more than a year, a large faction is subject to influence from the left and could be lured into an opposition role at any time.

Sadiq has expressed his hopes of solving the long-standing rebellion in the country's negroid southern provinces, of stabilizing the shaky economy, and of combating leftist influence in the trade union movement. Continuing intra-government conflicts will, however, make any such progress slow.

## 2. Economic

Although the Sudan possesses great resources in arable land and animals for the size of its population, the economy is basically weak. A preoccupation with political activity on the part of the nation's leaders since they came to power in late 1964 has largely precluded the initiation of effective economic development programs or any expansion of the country's industrial sector.

The Sudan's dependence on cotton as a major source of government revenue and private income constitutes a serious economic problem. Expensive long-staple cotton, the first to be affected by a fall in world demand, is the country's main crop. A poor yield or fluctuation in the world market price is quickly reflected in both the public and private economic sectors.

In addition, increased expenditures necessitated by the long drawn-out military campaign against southern insurgents have created a heavy drain on Khartoum's limited resources. The South itself contributes almost nothing to the nation's economy, and even the limited trade and industry in that area have been at a standstill since late 1964. The South has reverted to a subsistence economy as the fighting has continued.

Although the output of goods and services in 1965 increased markedly over 1964 because the cotton crop was almost 50% larger than the previous year, the Sudan's difficulties in marketing its cotton have caused financial strains. Foreign exchange holdings dropped to a record low in 1965, and in early 1966 government borrowings from the Bank of Sudan threatened to exceed the legal limit defined in the Bank of Sudan Act of 1959. In the first half of 1966, however, seasonal exports of cotton and receipt of some funds loaned by the IBRD and Kuwait alleviated the situation somewhat. The outlook for the Sudanese economy will probably not improve until political stability permits the government to come to grips with the serious economic problems confronting the nation.

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### 3. International Relations

The Sudan maintains an avowedly neutral foreign policy which is, however, generally pro-Western. The country's primary foreign aid ties have been with the West, although foreign trade is gradually becoming more oriented toward Communist markets.

The Sudan is a member of the Arab League and of the Organization of African Unity, but it has played a minor role in both organizations and, since the overthrow of the Communist-dominated regime in March 1965, the government has attempted to avoid foreign entanglements. The Sudan followed Egypt's lead in severing diplomatic relations with West Germany in early 1965 and the African initiative to break with Great Britain in connection with the Rhodesian crisis. Ties with Britain were, however, restored in early 1966.

Relations with Egypt remain a primary concern to any Sudanese government. Despite a continuing Egyptian subversive effort to strengthen the more radical minority parties to compete with the Umma, the present regime has developed at least a semblance of friendship with its more powerful northern neighbor.

Khartoum has diplomatic relations with the USSR, Communist China, and several Eastern European nations. Relations with the US have usually been cordial, although leftist politicians have attacked the limited US aid program from time to time.

### 4. Subversion

The Sudan's primary subversive problem is the long-standing rebellion of separatist-minded negroid Sudanese in the three southernmost provinces against the Arab-dominated Khartoum government. The rebellion began in 1955 and insurgent activity has been widespread since 1963. Most of the Sudan's 20,000-man army is tied down in the anti-guerrilla campaign, but government forces control only the larger towns and garrison areas in the south. The political situation is complex; five or more southern political parties claim to represent southern opinion in negotiations with Khartoum. An abortive round-table conference between northerners and southerners was held in early 1965, but since that time the government has usually chosen to deal with puppet southerners who command no real following in the south, and the fighting has dragged on. Although both the present civilian government and its predecessor have expressed intentions of finding a political solution to the problem, mutual hatred between Arab and Negro and Arab resistance to more than some token form of federation for the southern region will preclude a settlement for the foreseeable future.

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The Sudan Communist Party (SCP), which dominated the transitional government in late 1964 and early 1965, has been proscribed, but still dominates the trade union movement, student groups, and many professional organizations. The quality of the membership of the SCP is high, and, although small in comparison with the traditional parties, the Communists' organizational capabilities make them a continuing threat to any moderate regime.

The SCP has been supported since early 1965 by the erratic leadership of the pro-Egyptian People's Democratic Party (PDP), the political arm of the Khatmiyyah Brotherhood. The Khatmiyyah of the northern and eastern Sudan have long competed with the Ansar, but the sect has never constituted a cohesive political force which could successfully rival the descendants of the 19th century leader Mahdi Mohammad Ahmad who make up the Ansar. The PDP has become fragmented and factionalized and has played only a minor political role since the return to civilian rule.

#### 5. Ethnic Problems

The southern negroid dissident movement is a manifestation of a mutual antipathy between north and south which has its roots in the slave-trading days of the 19th Century. Approximately a third of the Sudan's 13.9 million inhabitants are negroid Nilotic, Nilo-Hamitic and Sudanic tribesmen, and almost a third more are of predominantly negroid stock. The rebellion has centered in the three southern and almost exclusively negroid provinces, but inhabitants of several border areas between North and South have threatened to join the insurgent movement and have sympathized with the southern cause. These include inhabitants of Darfur Province, who have formed the Darfur Development Front as a political voice for recognition of their non-Arab status, as well as educated Nuba tribesmen who have organized the Nuba Mountain Union with similar aims.

#### Chronology of Key Events

|             |   |
|-------------|---|
| Early 1800s | Arab slave traders from Egypt raid the Sudan.   |
| 1882        | British occupy Egypt. Sudanese Mahdi Mohammad Ahmad gains control of Kordofan Province. |
| 1885        | The Mahdi captures Khartoum and kills Governor General Charles Gordon.                  |
| 1898        | General Herbert Kitchener and an Anglo/Egyptian military force recapture Khartoum.      |

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- 1899-1955 As the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, the country is administered under the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium; in practice, it is governed by British administrative officials.
- 1930s Independence movement begins to develop.
- 1947 First overt expression of Communist activity in the Sudan.
- 1954 (January) Local self-government is implemented with a British Governor-General still responsible for foreign relations.  
A parliament is established, and National Unionist Party leader Ismail al-Azhari becomes prime minister.
- 1955 (August) Southern Sudanese dissidents break into open revolt against domination by the Arab government in Khartoum.
- 1956 (January) The Sudan achieves full independence. Al-Azhari heads a government coalition which includes the Umma party.  
(July) Abdallah Khalil, leader of the Umma party, becomes prime minister and forms a new government in coalition with the People's Democratic Party.
- 1958 (March) After the first national parliamentary elections since independence, Khalil continues as prime minister.  
(November) A group of senior army officers seizes control in a bloodless coup and concentrates executive, legislative and judicial powers in the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces headed by Lt. Gen. Ibrahim Abboud.
- 1963 Southern terrorist activity intensifies and ties up most of the Sudanese army.
- 1964 (October) Civilian pressures force the abdication of the Abboud junta; first transitional government dominated by the Sudan Communist Party and its sympathizers, is formed.
- 1965 (February) The Umma and National Unionist parties force resignation of the first transitional regime, establish a non-Communist second transitional cabinet, and begin preparations for early elections.  
(April/May) Elections for geographical constituencies in a Constituent Assembly are held in the six northern provinces, in which the Umma and NUP win a sub-

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- 1965           stantial majority. Dissidence in the three southern provinces forces an indefinite postponement of elections there.  
                   (June) Elections are held for 15 seats in the Assembly for graduates of secondary schools and universities. The Umma and NUP form a coalition government.  
                   (December) Muslim pressures lead the Constituent Assembly to proscribe the Sudan Communist Party.
- 1966           (July) Umma party president Sadiq al-Mahdi assumes premiership, replacing his Umma colleague Mohammed Mahjoub.

#### Selected Factual Data

##### LAND (U)

967,000 sq. mi.; 37% arable (3% cultivated), 11% grazing, 33% desert, waste, or urban, 19% forested

##### PEOPLE (Confidential)

Population: 13.9 million; males 15-49, 3,136,000; 1,610,000 fit for military service; average number currently reaching military age (18) annually, 135,000

Ethnic Divisions: 39% Arab, 9% Beja, Nubian in north, 48% Negroid elements in south, 4% other

Religion: 73% Sunni Muslims in north, 27% mostly pagan and some Christians in south

Language: Arabic, Nubian, Ta Bedawie, diverse dialects of Nilotic, Nilo-Hamitic and Sudanic languages, English; intense program of Arabization in process

Literacy: 5%-10%

Labor force: 3.8 million; 85% agriculture, 15% industry, commerce, services, etc.; labor shortages exist (1962) for almost all categories of employment

##### GOVERNMENT (Secret-No Foreign Dissem)

Capital: Khartoum

Regional breakdown: 9 provinces, provincial and local administrations controlled by central government

Type: republic

Branches: 15 portfolio-cabinet, coalition of Umma and National Union parties under Umma prime minister Mohammed Mahjoub; Supreme Council under permanent chairmanship of NUP leader Ismail al-Azhari functions as chief of state; local and provincial

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administrative officials responsible to cabinet through Ministry of Local Government

Government leader: Prime Minister Sadiq al-Mahdi

Suffrage: universal adult

Elections: parliamentary elections, the first after 6 years of military rule held in April and May 1965 in six northern provinces; elections in three southern provinces postponed indefinitely due to widespread insurgency

Political parties and leaders: all parties legal since Oct. 1964, with exception of Communist Party which was proscribed in Dec. 1965; Umma Party (President-Sadiq al-Mahdi) is political arm of traditional Ansar religious brotherhood; National Union Party is primarily an urban group; People's Democratic Party (President-Sayyid Ali Abd-al-Rahman) is allied with Khatmiyyah religious brotherhood; Negroid southerners represented by various southern parties, some of which operate from exile in neighboring black African countries

Voting strength: not tabulated by party

Communists: 5-10,000; several thousand sympathizers; with supporters, obtained dominant position in Oct. 1964 transitional government and hastily formed national front organization; now control 9 representatives in the constituent assembly (total membership 176); main strength in labor unions, some professional associations and university student groups

Other political or pressure groups: SANU has agitated for southern separatism and carried on terrorist activity in the three negroid southern provinces since 1963

Member of: U.N. (IAEA, IBRD, ILO, IFC, IDA, IMF, ICAU, ITU, UPU, WMO), Arab League, OAU

#### ECONOMY (Secret-No Foreign Dissem)

GDP: US\$1,176 million (1963-64), about \$90 per capita

Agriculture: main crops-sorghum, millet, wheat, sesame, peanuts, beans, barley; not self-sufficient in food production; main cash crops-cotton, gum arabic

Major industries: cotton ginning, textiles, brewery, cement, edible oils, soap, distilling, shoes, pharmaceuticals

Electric power: 59,000 kw. capacity (1963); 163 million kw.-hr. produced by public sector (1963)

Exports: US\$196 million (1964); 50-60% cotton (long-staple), gum arabic, peanuts, sesame; \$25.3 million exports to bloc (1964)

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Imports: US\$267 million (1964); textiles, petroleum products, vehicles, tea, wheat; \$28.4 imports from bloc (1964)

Trade: main foreign trade partners: U.K., West Germany, Italy, India

Aid: U.K., West Germany, Yugoslavia; bloc economic aid \$33.0 million extended through Dec. 1965; U.S. economic, \$89.0 million cumulative (1965); U.N., IBRD, IFC, IDA, \$101.0 million extended through FY 1964

Exchange rate: 1 Sudanese pound = US\$2.87 (official)

Fiscal year: 1 July-30 June

#### COMMUNICATIONS (Confidential)

Railroads: 2,937 mi., all 3'6" gage; single track; government owned

Highways: 16,000 mi.; 132 mi. paved, 1,000 mi. otherwise improved, 14,868 mi. unimproved

Inland waterways: 932 mi.

Freight carried: rail-1.552 billion ton/km., (1960) 2.051 million tons originated

Ports: 1 principal (Port Sudan)

Merchant marine: 4 cargo ships (1,000 GRT or over) totaling 16,262 GRT, 19,400 DWT

Civil air: 13 major transport aircraft

Airfields: 61 total, 51 usable; 4 with permanent-surface runways; 1 with runway 8,000-11,999 ft.; 24 with runways 4,000-7,999 ft.

Telecommunications: telephone service fair; telegraph and broadcast fair to good; 1 TV and 2 AM stations; 32,700 telephones

#### DEFENSE FORCES (Secret)

Personnel: army 20,000, navy 300, air force 500 (30 pilots)

Major ground units: 13 infantry battalions, 2 battalion-size regiments (1 artillery, 1 armored), 1 engineer battalion, and support troops

Ships: 4 patrol craft

Aircraft: 22 (10 jet)

Supply: produces small-arms ammunition; all other material imported, primarily from U.K., but also from West Germany, U.S.S.R., U.A.R., Algeria, and the Netherlands; motor gunboats purchased from Yugoslavia

Military budget: for fiscal year ending 30 June 1966, \$40,840,000; about 12% of total budget

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**National Intelligence Survey (NIS) Material**

The following sections of the NIS are relevant:

**NIS Area 54 (Sudan)**

Chapter I and the following specialized sections:

- Sec 22 Coasts and Landing Beaches
- Sec 23 Weather and Climate
- Sec 24 Topography
- Sec 25 Urban Areas
- Sec 26 Analysis of Military Geographic Regions
- Sec 31 Railway
- Sec 32 Highway
- Sec 33 Inland Waterway
- Sec 35 Ports and Naval Facilities
- Sec 37 Civil Air
- Sec 41 Population
- Sec 43 Religion, Education, & Public Information
- Sec 45 Health and Sanitation
- Sec 52 Structure of the Government
- Sec 53 Political Dynamics
- Sec 55 National Policies

Sec 61 Agriculture, Fisheries, and Forestry

Sec 62 Fuels and Power

Sec 91-94 Map and Chart Appraisal

Gazetteer

**Map**

The best available general reference map is: Shell Company of Sudan, Ltd and Sudan Survey Department; *Shell Motorists Map of the Sudan*; 1:4,000,000; 1962

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